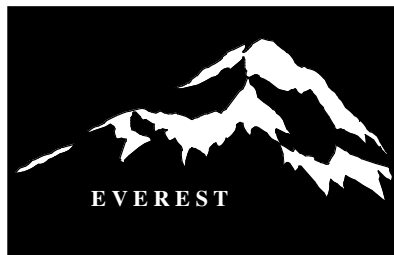


HELLO THERE!

My name is Tenzing, and I have been instructed to give you a quick overview of the Himalayas. First, let me tell you about my family, who lives here in Tibet. We live in a town right on the border with Nepal. I'm sure you've heard lots about the Himalayas, and I'm happy to help with your investigation. I have been giving tours of the Himalayas for years now, and I always get very excited when people want to learn more about the largest and highest mountain range in the world!



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A large number of the world's highest peaks, including the tallest peak Mount Everest, are located in the Himalayan range.

No doubt you will want to hear about the two famous peaks in the Himalayas – Mount Everest, the tallest peak in the world at 8,850 m (29,035 ft), and K2, which is the second-tallest peak at 8,611 m (28,250 ft). In fact, the ten highest mountains on Earth are found right here in the Himalayas. By the way, the Nepalese call the Himalayas the “home of the snows.”

The Himalayas aren't just found here in Tibet and Nepal. They stretch across northern India and make a border between India and the rest of Asia. This “wall,” as locals call it, leads to two very distinct climates around the region. My father studies weather patterns around the area, and he tells me that the mountains block the warm and moist Indian monsoon winds, so

the plateau of Tibet is one of the driest and coolest places on Earth! In contrast, these monsoon winds heap heavy rainfall on India.

Along with the differences in climate comes a rich mix of ecosystems and habitats. The area around the Himalayas has all kinds of forests and even deserts. The ecosystem has great biodiversity, but my father says that with all the incoming tourists and economic development (new roads and settlers), the area may encounter many kinds of environmental problems in the future.

But don't worry about that for now. Let me tell you about the rich history of these mountains, especially Mount Everest. First, does my name sound familiar to you at all? If



Mount Everest in the Himalayan Mountains  
[http://www.ri.net/schools/Central\\_Falls/v/218/asia.html](http://www.ri.net/schools/Central_Falls/v/218/asia.html)

you've heard of it, it's because my name has a special bond to Mount Everest. Why? My parents named me after the famous Sherpa Tenzing Norgay, who accompanied Sir Edmund Hillary of New Zealand as he became the first man to reach the top of Mount Everest in 1953. So my name is etched in history! By the way, the Sherpas are a group of traditionally Buddhist people that live around this area. They are world famous for being expert guides on mountain climbing expeditions. Since 1953, 550 people from 20 different countries have successfully climbed to the peak of Mount Everest – many with the help of Sherpas.

Sadly, many people have died trying to climb the peaks of Mount Everest and K2. It's commonly said that even though Mount Everest is taller, K2 is more dangerous and difficult to climb, or summit. In 1954, two Italians reached the top of K2 after many tries. I have a group of friends at the local high school I attend that always boast about how they're going to climb K2 one day, even though it is only climbed by the world's most expert mountain climbers. I hope they think that journey through!



It is very dangerous on a mountain like Mount Everest. Some hazards, such as thundering avalanches, freak storms, and hidden crevasses are beyond a climber's control.

[http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/05/0513\\_020514\\_ADValtitude.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/05/0513_020514_ADValtitude.html)

Another interesting bit of information about the Himalayas – it grows about 3 cm every year. Forces from the surrounding area push these mountains upward, but the ground erodes away almost as fast, so the mountain range stays about the same elevation. At the summit of Mt. Everest, scientists have found fossils of ancient sea cucumbers and plants. Imagine that – the highest peak in our world today was once at the bottom of a deep ocean.

But one thing is certain – the area has its share of problems. Earthquakes and avalanches are common occurrences here, always making the Himalayas dangerous, especially to those who are unfamiliar with the area. There are volcanoes scattered throughout the area. It's kind of hard to imagine volcanoes in a snow-filled place, right? Maybe you can visit one day and see for yourself!

Your pal,  
Tenzing Sharwa  
28°N 87°E